

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Doris Ige Fujii

"When I graduated, my father had cancer. You know, he was sixty-two, I think. So, I was thinking, I wanted to be a beautician. . . . But I couldn't go to [beautician] school because he wasn't working, and I had three younger [siblings] in the family, so I had to work. I worked one year [for the] plantation. . . . I don't think I can do that now. We [walked behind] the crane, and we had to cut whatever left cane and make a pile so the crane can pick it up. So one year I did that. Hard work."

Doris Ige Fujii was born in 1931 and raised in Māla Village in Lahaina. She was the fourth of seven children born to Okinawan immigrants, Tokusuge Ige and Kamado Nakama Ige.

Fujii attended King Kamehameha III School and Lahainaluna High School, graduating in 1950. While in high school, Fujii worked in the Pioneer Mill Company sugar fields and in Baldwin Packers' pineapple cannery. Her family eventually moved to Keawe Camp, a community of Pioneer Mill Company employees and families.

Fujii retired in 1993 as a waitress at the Sheraton Kā'anapali Hotel. She lives in West Maui with her husband, Harumi Fujii. The couple raised three children and has two grandchildren.

Tape No. 39-10-1-03

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Doris Ige Fujii (DF)

Lahaina, Maui

January 16, 2003

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Doris Ige Fujii for the Pioneer Mill oral history project on January 16, 2003. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. We are at her home in Lahaina, Maui.

Okay, Doris. When and where were you born?

DF: I was born in Lahaina, Māla Village, 1931.

WN: So, what were your parents doing in Māla Village when you were born?

DF: Well, my mom was at Kula Hospital [i.e., Kula Sanatorium]. She had tuberculosis. We were small so I don't know at what age she was [there]. But my father used to work for the plantation driving truck.

WN: So as far as you remember, your mother was at Kula?

DF: Kula, when we were small. So relatives used to come and help, because we had seven of us in the family.

WN: What number were you?

DF: Four.

WN: What kind of job did your father have?

DF: He used to drive truck for the plantation. Picking up rubbish, I think. Before that, he used to drive taxi.

WN: Really?

DF: Yeah. And he used to love his drinks, so he used to drink when his friends come over.

WN: So, the taxi, was that his own business?

DF: Yeah. That's when he just came from Japan, I think. But as long as I remember, he was driving truck.

WN: So your mother eventually got better and was . . .

DF: Yes. She came home. I wonder how many years she was up there, though. She came home and she was healthy. Then she had pleurisy after so many years, so she went back [to Kula Sanatorium]. Stayed one year more. But she lived till [age] ninety-eight. Three years ago she passed away.

WN: Wow.

DF: She lived long and she was healthy after that. No problems. Till she passed away she was healthy. (Chuckles) I thought she was going to live to a hundred. But she just slept, didn't get up in the morning. That's how she went.

WN: So the time when she was at Kula and, you know, being sick, who took care of you folks?

DF: We used to have relatives come around. I remember about two or three ladies used to come around. It was hard with a big family like that (chuckles).

WN: Yeah!

DF: Everyone was small, I don't remember how old I was but I remember that.

WI: Did your brothers and sisters help take care of each other, too?

DF: I don't know how old I was, but I remember only the ladies coming around to help. You know, kids just like to play, you know? And we used to live near the beach, so every day we used to go to the beach, all of us.

WN: Māla Village, was that part of the plantation?

DF: No, that's—I don't know. There must've been a plantation [connection]. You know where it is now, by Chart House.

WN: Oh, okay.

DF: It's right near the beach, by [Lahaina] Jōdō Mission. Around there. Yeah, must be plantation, my father was working plantation. But we had fun going to the beach, and then. . .

WN: Nice place to grow up. (Chuckles)

DF: . . . and playing in the *kiawe* trees we used to have. Play house over there.

WN: How old were you when you moved to Keawe [Camp]?

DF: I was high school, I think.

WN: Oh, high school. So, your childhood was pretty much Māla Village, then.

DF: Māla, yeah. And used to be lot of different. Hawaiians were living there.

- WN: So besides playing house in the *kiawe* tree, what did you folks do to have good fun as children at Māla Village?
- DF: Mostly that I remember. Beach and play house, like that. Of course, we used to play games like marbles. We used to dig holes and play certain—I don't know what you call it—game. With marbles you put in every hole, like that. (Chuckles)
- WN: Right, right.
- DF: And who gets the most wins, you know. And games like beanbag, like that. Throw at each other. (Chuckles) It's fun.
- WN: You say there were Hawaiians at the camp. How did it break down in terms of nationality?
- DF: I noticed a lot of Hawaiians. And not too many homes, just one row. Not like a camp, you know. Just one row, and up and down had houses. And had a church. It was a Catholic church, I think. Catholic church near our place.
- WN: Now what was your house like? Can you describe your house for me?
- DF: We had a big yard. And then the house was a three-bedroom house. So it was nice. Not like camps with [community] toilet. [We had our] own toilet. When I moved to Keawe Camp, we had our own toilet. But then when I married, we had to go to the community toilet.
- (Laughter)
- DF: Same camp, but funny, yeah? I had to use the community toilet.
- WN: Really?
- DF: So. Was getting worse.
- (Laughter)
- WN: Supposed to be getting better.
- DF: I know.
- (Laughter)
- WN: So, Māla, you said you had three bedrooms, no, three rooms.
- DF: It was three bedrooms. Even when I moved to Keawe Camp we had three bedrooms. Big house. We had our own toilet. Funny, yeah? Same camp, Keawe Camp. But after that, I had to use the community toilet. (Chuckles)
- WN: So, at Māla there were seven of you. Seven children plus your father.
- DF: Right now---of course two passed away. We have five right now.
- WN: So were your friends not only Japanese, but other nationalities, too?

- DF: When we were small, yeah. When we got to high school, mostly, of course I was already at Keawe Camp [which was] mostly Japanese. So we used to take the bus to go to school. My husband folks used to walk.
- WN: When you were at Māla, you went to [King] Kam[ehameha] III School?
- DF: Yeah.
- WN: You caught bus to go there?
- DF: No, we used to walk.
- WN: So, when you moved Keawe Camp, you were still going Kam III School, or were you going to Lahainaluna [School] by then?
- DF: I think I was Lahainaluna already.
- WN: Lahainaluna already.
- DF: Or maybe eighth grade, I'm not too sure. (Chuckles) Cannot remember.
- WN: Kam III School went up to eighth, yeah?
- DF: Eighth grade, yeah.
- WN: And then ninth grade you went Lahainaluna.
- DF: Yeah.
- WN: So right about that time you folks moved from Māla to Keawe?
- DF: Yeah, I think it was about eighth grade, if I'm not mistaken. When I graduated, my father had cancer. You know, he was sixty-two, I think. So, I was thinking, I wanted to be a beautician. And that's only for one year [of schooling]. But I couldn't go to [beautician] school because he wasn't working, and I had three younger [siblings] in the family, so I had to work. I worked one year [for the] plantation, underneath the crane. I don't know what you call that. (Chuckles) I don't think I can do that now.
- WN: What would you do with the crane?
- DF: We [walked behind] the crane, and we had to cut whatever left cane and make a pile so the crane can pick it up. So one year I did that. Hard work. (Chuckles)
- WN: So you cut [whatever the crane missed].
- DF: Yeah.
- WN: Oh, I see.
- DF: In fact, when I was fifteen, I went Lāna'i to work because hard to get job here. Maybe from sixteen you can work, but [I was] fifteen. I had a cousin there so I worked one year. Carried pineapple in a bag. Never used to have the [harvesting] machine before. You have to carry the pineapple in a bag and carry [the pineapple] out to the line. It was hard

work. I still remember, at night we used to—with my cousins—used to massage the shoulders.

(Laughter)

DF: No wonder I get aches and pains now. (Chuckles)

WN: How did you get paid for that? You get paid by the pineapple or by the hour?

DF: By the hour. That was hard work. (Chuckles)

WN: So what was your first job? I mean, from the time when you were young, where did you work first?

DF: Oh, like everybody else, we used to cut grass [in the cane fields] when we were high school. Weekends, like that. And then [Baldwin Packers] cannery. Right across Keawe Camp, I used to work cannery.

WN: Oh, you worked cannery? Oh, okay. Well, I'll ask you that later, but I wanted to ask you, why did your family move from Māla to Keawe?

DF: I don't know the reason, actually. (Chuckles)

WN: You remember if you were happy or sad to leave? You remember anything like that?

DF: No, I just remember moving, though. But [Keawe Camp] was a better place to me because [there were] more people. And our cousins all were living there, so we used to go school together. It was fun.

WN: So you actually had to move away from the ocean, though.

DF: Yeah, that was the hard thing. It was real fun. Swimming. Every day I think we used to go beach.

WN: So you worked Lāna'i for one summer.

DF: Yeah. In the fields, part-time, plantation. And then the cannery. At the cannery, I was part-time. I wasn't a regular worker so when off-season you don't have any work. So we used to go out in a field, pineapple field, pick pine[apple]. By that time we had the [harvesting] machine already. So we'd just pick and put [the fruit] in the conveyor.

WN: I see. You walk behind the conveyor.

DF: But we had to wake up early, four o'clock in the morning, make your *bentō*, you know. Come home, do your work [i.e., chores]. (Chuckles) Work, work, work.

WN: Did you have a choice of working pineapple or sugar?

DF: Yeah, I guess so. Sugar was mostly weekends, I think. But cannery, you get seasonal [work]. So many months, you can work. Even my mother used to work pineapple cannery when we were small, I guess when she was healthy. She used to bring home the core of the pineapple [for us to eat]. (Chuckles) I remember that. She worked kind of long, too, pineapple cannery.

WN: What kind of job did you do in the cannery?

DF: I used to work on that machine that the cans come out and it sucks the cans and then you stick them on another conveyor.

WN: Empty cans?

DF: No, the full kind. I liked that job. It was good.

WN: So you worked with the tray boys?

DF: No, you have to work [by] yourself on the machine. Sometimes the machine broke down, of course, so they used to come and fix.

WN: What did the machine do?

DF: It sucks all the cans and puts them in another place. And I also used to stack cans in the warehouse. It was a good job. I used to like the warehouse. My mother used to work trimming. But that, you have to keep up with the [Ginaca] machine. She used to complain all the time. (Chuckles)

WN: Which did you like more, you like pineapple or you like sugar?

DF: Pineapple. (Chuckles)

WN: How come?

DF: To me it's easier. Plantation, you know, hot, you have to cover up yourself. (Pause) But that's how we had to live.

WN: Did you get to keep all the money you made?

DF: No, I don't remember the money. Must be our parents [kept it] because (chuckles) they need the money for school, like that. I don't know about the money. Even Lāna'i, when I would work I was thinking, "Oh, I wonder what I did with the money."

(Laughter)

DF: But I was only fifteen so I must've sent it home. We were busy too because we had a lot of ducks, chickens, rabbits, you know, all those things.

WN: This is Māla or Keawe?

DF: Keawe Camp. Aside from that, the pigs. We had lots when we were small. So, they used to salt the pork with Hawaiian salt to preserve. So, like, my brother, he didn't like pork too much so he opened canned goods.

(Laughter)

DF: Like us, we ate vegetables and pork. But I remember he used to open canned goods. Even now I think he doesn't eat like us. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you keep the pork only for yourselves, or did you. . . .

- DF: Once a year he [father] used to deliver it to wherever he used to collect the pigs' food. Give it to them [as a thank-you], the pork. Just once a year, though. Outside from that, he used to salt it up.
- WN: You mean the salt pork?
- DF: Yeah.
- WN: Did it last longer?
- DF: Yeah. That's how they used to do. But hard work to raise. You know, to collect the [pigs'] food, cook the food, clean the [pen].
- WN: So the food was swill with the grass.
- DF: Yeah. Right. Everybody used to do that.
- WN: So you just boil it together.
- DF: Yeah, they cook 'em. A lot of work raising pigs.
- WN: And chickens, you said.
- DF: Chickens, ducks too.
- WN: Ducks?
- DF: Yeah, ducks, rabbits. . .
- WN: Was there some place with water where the ducks could swim around?
- DF: No, I don't remember that.
- WN: So you used to cook ducks, too?
- DF: Oh, we were small, so, yeah, I guess we used to cook everything and eat.
- WN: Rabbits too?
- DF: Rabbits too. (Chuckles) You eat rabbit too?
- WN: I've never had rabbit.
- DF: Yeah? Oh.
- WN: You like it?
- DF: When we were [visiting] in Europe—you know, my son-in-law is from Europe—the mother cooked rabbit in paella, with the rice.
- WN: Paella, yeah.

DF: It's good. Just like chicken anyway. White meat. A lot of people, they don't like rabbit because after you kill, that thing still move, you know? (Chuckles). But duck was good. I like duck. And duck had bigger eggs too. The eggs are larger.

WN: Oh, really?

Does---did your parents have a garden?

DF: Oh, yeah. Garden. I remember peanuts, I don't know why. Something different. (Chuckles)

WN: Peanuts, what else?

DF: Well, all kind of vegetables. Kind of big garden, we had. But, usually the parents take care. My mother and father used to take care. We never used to work in the garden. But we had a lot of fruits.

WN: On the property?

DF: Yeah. Figs, sour sap, starfruit, guava, avocado, and mango.

WN: You folks would just pick and eat? Or your mother would prepare something?

DF: We would pick and eat. So we used to climb trees all the time. (Chuckles) Tomboy.

WN: Wow, so that's a lot. You folks had a lot of food around. We have to buy.

DF: Yeah, that's right. Nowadays you have to buy all the fruits. Before, I don't think we had to buy. We had all kinds of fruits.

WN: So what kinds of things would your mother have to buy for your food? I mean, I know rice you folks had to buy.

DF: Oh, yeah. The rest of the things you have to buy. Like chickens, you don't have to buy. Now, we buy chicken. I guess meat you had to buy, of course.

WN: Did you folks have beef?

DF: We had to buy [at the] market. We never did see too much beef. Of course, we had pork, too.

WN: When you folks had pork it was mostly cut up with vegetables. But not the kind of big *lū'au* with the pig at one time.

DF: Yeah. Like now they make *huli huli*. Of course, Okinawa, they make pig feet soup all the time.

WN: You folks didn't make?

DF: Used to make.

WN: Oh, you folks made?

DF: In fact, my mother lived with me after I retired, so, she loved her pig feet soup. (Chuckles) I always had to make. Nowadays I don't make too often.

(Laughter)

DF: In fact, hard to get, pig feet. Especially island kind. I don't like the Mainland kind. Wailuku, they have open market. So my daughter buys once in a while, I guess she misses that.

WN: Yeah, I love pig's feet soup.

DF: Yeah? Oh, good. I put a little bit miso inside. Something like miso soup.

WN: Oh, that's the soup base? Miso?

DF: I put. Yeah. Some people just make plain.

WN: What kind vegetables you put inside?

DF: Daikon, carrots, potato. Just about the three. Of course, even when you get the other—what you call it? *Tōgan*.

WN: *Tōgan*, squash.

DF: That's good. That's better, yeah?

WN: With ginger, you put ginger inside?

DF: No, I don't put. Like some, Honolulu, they put on the side. Oxtail soup, they put ginger on the side. Oxtail soup is good.

WN: Did you folks have oxtail when you were growing up?

DF: No, I don't remember. (Chuckles) Chicken soup most of the time.

WN: So, did your mother have a midwife?

DF: No, I don't think so.

WN: So you folks went hospital? I mean, when you folks were born, did [your mother] go to the hospital?

DF: Yeah. Our hospital used to be here before.

WN: Right.

DF: But when my kids [were born], of course, we had to go Wailuku.

WN: Did you go all the way to Wailuku to give birth?

DF: Yeah.

(Laughter)

DF: What if you give birth on the way?

WN: I know!

(Laughter)

WN: Well now, not so bad, because the roads are wide and, you know. . .

DF: No, but what if you get accident, and only one way to go there? Did you hear about that accident just the other day? Right by Launiupoko by the park.

WN: Oh, jammed up by traffic.

DF: Yeah.

WN: Okay. So. . . . What about, like, holidays? How did you folks celebrate New Year's?

DF: Well, I just remember lots of food, [and] going house-to-house. That's about all, New Year's. Eat whole day. Even now, I make once a year, in January, with a kind of food, of course.

WN: *Ozoni*?

DF: Yeah, *ozoni*. Big pot, I make. And then, some stuff you don't eat on regular days like black beans. Just once a year I buy that beans, and of course some *mochi*, *namasu*, *tako*.

WN: *Kazunoko*? You make *kazunoko*?

DF: No, I don't see nowadays that too much.

WN: Too expensive, I think.

DF: We used to get that all the time.

WN: Yeah.

DF: But what is expensive is *buri*. I use that for *ozoni*.

WN: *Buri*. . . .

DF: That's about eighteen dollars a pound.

WN: What is that?

DF: The fish from Japan.

WN: Oh.

DF: I make the *ozoni* with that. This year was hard to get. Expensive. But I do it only once a year.

WN: Okay. So you went to Lahainaluna School. Was that a big change from Kam III School?

DF: Classes, you mean?

WN: Yeah, for you. Was it really different?

DF: The only difference, we used to walk to school, Kam III, but Lahainaluna we had bus. So was easy.

WN: I forgot to ask you when you moved to Keawe Camp, did what you did to have fun change? You know, because now you don't go beach as much. Plus you were older though.

DF: But was close though, so once in a while we used to go down, because it's right straight up.

WN: That's true.

DF: We used to still go beach, like that. We used to ride bicycle a lot. (Chuckles) I guess just for fun, ride bicycle around. Nothing exciting.

WN: Did you go movies?

DF: Younger time. I think after I got married we used to go once in a while. But in the camps, we never used to go to the movies. We used to do more reading because no TV at that time.

WN: What did you like to read?

DF: Comics. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you learn things like sewing?

DF: Oh, yes. We went to sewing school. Mrs. Ah Sing. She's passed away, but. . . . I used to sew everything. Pajamas, pants, shirts. Of course, now, I don't sew. I just buy. Easier. We learned how to make our own patterns. Draft. I used to sew a lot. Not anymore. But you save a lot. Like before, you just buy the material, but when my kids were small I used to sew all their pajamas.

WN: That's a good skill to have. (Chuckles)

DF: Now, I like to do more embroidery. My mother was real crafty. She crocheted a lot of things. I guess when you're in Kula [Hospital] they teach you to do things. So she used to do a lot of those things. And after living by herself, the Salvation Army used to come and teach, I think. She used to go. . . . she used to help ring the bell, Christmastime.

WN: Oh, yeah?

DF: Yeah. But I don't do that. (Chuckles)

WN: Did you miss your mother when she was gone?

DF: Yeah, because she was living with me. Of course, before that she was living with my older sister, but she has Alzheimer's and she cannot take care anymore, so. . . . And I guess my mother used to stay by herself more. My sister and husband go play tennis ten

hours every day, and I guess they don't spend as much time with her. So I used to go down to visit her and then she was really waiting to come up here. (Chuckles) So she was happy [to come and live with DF].

WN: And when she was at Kula for example, did you miss her?

DF: We were small, too, so not as much.

WN: Oh, I see.

DF: But the second time when she went, we missed her more because we were more grown up already. She had pleurisy, that time. Just one year she stayed up there.

WN: It seems like a long time, though, for a small girl to be away from her mother.

DF: Yeah. I guess we were a big family so we all played together. If you alone you feel more lonesome. And it's far away, about fifty miles to Kula. So, we couldn't go every weekend.

WN: When you were going to Lahainaluna, what did you want to do? What did you want to be?

DF: I wanted to be a beautician, I told you so. (Chuckles)

WN: But you couldn't go because you couldn't go to school.

DF: Yeah, I had to work. But I practiced on my sister, my mother, all permanent. I used to make. . . . I cut their hair.

WN: No kidding?

DF: Even my sister, I still cut their hair. My husband. I cut all their hair. My kids, I used to practice on their hair. (Chuckles) I hardly go beautician. I make my own perm, fix my own hair.

WN: Oh. . . . Too bad you couldn't do it for pay. (Chuckles)

DF: I know. (Chuckles) Even my friends used to come, I used to cut their hair. But I like cooking. But a lot of men are better cooks nowadays. Like my two boys, they love cooking. And good for their wives. They ask for recipe, and then they cook. My younger boy in Honolulu, he even makes *mochi*.

WN: No kidding?

DF: Yeah. So his friends said, "Oh, your mom sent the *mochi*?"

He say, "No, I made it." (Chuckles)

WN: You mean, he pounds it? Or. . .

DF: No, the kind—what you call it?—*chichidango*? The soft kind in squares. He makes it. I steam it and then mix it up. So, he makes that. You cook too?

WN: No. (Chuckles)

DF: You don't mind me asking questions to you, eh? (Chuckles)

WN: I'd like to cook, but I don't.

DF: A lot of men, they like cooking. My husband too, he doesn't cook. More things to do anyway than cooking.

So nothing exciting. . . . (Chuckles)

WN: Okay, so, I think that's all.

DF: Thank you.

WN: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

PIONEER MILL COMPANY:

A Maui Sugar Plantation Legacy

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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